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AIR CONNECTIVITY AND DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGY DRIVING TOURISM

In an exclusive with Sandeep Dwivedi, COO, InterGlobe Technology Quotient, Travel Heights talks about the growth of aviation industry in India and the how aviation industry and technology is driving the Tourism landscape in the country.

Rajeev Suman

Tell us about your views on UDAN scheme.

SD UDAN is undoubtedly an innovative initiative by the Indian

government to make air travel affordable to the common man of the country. It aims to connect 70 airports including the under-served and unserved; first flight on Delhi-

Shimla route operated by Alliance Air, subsidiary of Air India has already been flagged off in 2017 as a part of the scheme. This will absolutely boost the regional air

travel market of the nation. Under the plan, many new airports were built in the previous year and in fact, many existing air-strips and airports have been renovated.

I view UDAN as a visionary step for the Indian travel and tourism domain. Not just travelers, but travel agents would also benefit from this market-based mechanism. For all the stakeholders, it would bring positive transformations.

How has the Open Sky policy beneficial for the industry?

SD The Open Sky policy is a rightful decision for the travel and tourism industry. The concept calls for the liberalization of the international aviation industry's rules and regulations. It provides opportunity to create a true free-market for the air travel sector.

Talking about the Indian travel and tourism industry, the open sky policy is a great way to increase international passenger travel, offer competitive prices between different airlines, set up more efficient airline procedures and provide an improved overall flight experience. Additionally, the policy has also given economic benefits; growth in tourism, trade, employment and investments.

With this policy in place, the aviation industry has seen dynamic shifts in the air travel business in the past couple of years. International passenger traffic grew YoY by 10.43% to reach 65.48 million in FY18, it is estimated to become 76 million in FY20E. During April to August 2018, the passenger traffic in India was at 141.77 million, out of which the international traffic contributed 28.32 million. Open Sky policy has opened new doorways for inbound tourism, which directly contributes to the overall travel and tourism industry of India.

What is the role of technology in promoting tourism today? How has it made life easier both for tourists

IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS, WE SEE OURSELVES AS RENDERING MORE INTELLIGENT TRAVEL SOLUTIONS TO MEET THE MOST COMPLEX DEMANDS FROM TRAVEL CLIENTS. OUR FOCUS HAS ALWAYS BEEN ON RESEARCH, TECHNOLOGY AND SUPERIOR CUSTOMER SATISFACTION EXPERIENCE.

as well as service providers in the sector?

SD We are living in the age of digitalization, where every piece of information is right there at your fingertips. From seeking a travel destination to making airline and hotel bookings, technological advancements have made it all very simple and hassle-free. We cannot deny the pivotal role technology plays in the tourism industry today; it has influenced and still continues to reshape the way we travel.

Mobile technology is the one of the most groundbreaking advancements in travel and tourism domain. Our Smartphone have now become our local tour guide, travel agency, hotel and restaurant locator, and what not! The availability of being online has simplified travel buying and selling experience for travelers and travel agents, respectively.

A majority of population in India uses Smartphone, which shows that people want all the information and facilities within few clicks. They can look out for the best deals on flights, hotels, car rentals, etc. within the reach of their hand-held device. Catering to these demands, travel service providers have also embraced the technological advancements in their businesses. They are thriving on the latest advancements in technology such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data, Augmented Reality and

Virtual Assistants to offer their end users with the best personalized travel solutions and great customer experience.

Where do you see the ITQ 5 years down the line? What strategic investments are you planning?

SD What drives ITQ is the quest to keep innovating and come up with technologically sound tools and services to provide the best-in-class experience to our customers. In the next 5 years, we see ourselves as rendering more intelligent travel solutions to meet the most complex demands from travel clients. Our focus has always been on research, technology and superior customer satisfaction experience. And, being a responsible member of the travel and tourism fraternity, ITQ would leave no stone unturned to come up with futuristic and customer-centric tools and software to assist the entire industry in making new advancements.

Our prime area of focus is to reinvent our products and services to enable our clients with latest tools and end-to-end personalized services. Also, this year has been extremely crucial for ITQ; Travelport offering NDC content and Air India giving sole distribution rights to Travelport, many landmark moments for us! In this line, we plan to put our efforts in the direction of becoming stronger by associating with the topmost players of the aviation sector. ■